

THE Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

Campaign moving to states

Same sex marriage lawsuits localize

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — In a development that could eventually envelop Mississippi, at least five states are facing legal battles over marriage definitions that could determine whether the tone set by the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) demise will resonate in individual states.

An Arkansas lesbian couple filed a lawsuit in Pulaski County Circuit Court that alleges the unconstitutionality of an Arkansas amendment that defines marriage as between one man and one woman, the Arkansas Baptist News said.

According to the Detroit Free Press, another lesbian couple has pushed for the legalization of same sex marriage in Michigan, another state with a marriage amendment.

Same sex marriage advocates also have announced plans to try and overturn traditional marriage laws in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

The suits, if eventually taken



CHALLENGING THE STATES — Hundreds of same-sex marriage supporters await release of the July 26 same sex marriage rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court at a rally in front of the court building in Washington, D.C. Since achieving victory at the Supreme Court, same sex marriage supporters have pledged to turn their attention to the states — including Mississippi. (BP photo)

up by the U.S. Supreme Court, could result in same sex marriage being legalized nationwide. The U.S. Senate and the Administrative Office of the United States Courts already are supporting an affirmation of same-sex couples' rights to federal benefits no matter what state they live in, The New York Times reported.

Mississippi has a constitutional amendment, approved by voters in 2004, that reads, "Mar-

riage may take place and may be valid under the laws of this state only between a man and a woman. A marriage in another state or foreign jurisdiction between persons of the same gender, regardless of when the marriage took place, may not be recognized in this state and is void and unenforceable under the laws of this state."

The amendment was passed by 86% of Mississippi voters, giv-

ing the state the highest percentage of support among all states where such amendments have appeared on ballots.

The Campaign for Southern Equality, based in Asheville, N.C., has a project underway whereby local same sex couples apply for marriage licenses in various counties of Southern states that have marriage amendments. So

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Syria civil war grows perilous for Christians

WASHINGTON (BP) — Syrian Christians are caught in the middle of the conflict between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebel fighters in that Middle East country's prolonged civil war, according to recent testimony in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"They face a distinct peril so dire that their ability to survive in Syria is being seriously doubted by church leaders and independent secular observers alike," said Nina Shea, director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, during testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa.

The United Nations reports 93,000 people have died and 1.6 million Syrians have fled the country.

More Christian refugees are fleeing Syria than any other religious or ethnic group, according to the Vulnerability Assessment of Syria's Christians, a report by Open Doors International, an organization

that supports the persecuted church.

Christian men are being pressured from both sides to join the fight, according to a World Watch Monitor report on June 25. M. Zuhdi Jasser, a commissioner with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, said Assad's government is making the most direct push for their support.

Before the war, Assad's government permitted Christians to worship freely as long as they did not politically oppose him, said Jasser, who also testified before the House subcommittee.

"The regime refers to the opposition and all Sunni Muslims as both extremists and terrorists who seek to turn Syria into an Islamic state which would be unwelcoming to religious minority communities," Jasser testified.

"Christians are the targets of an ethnoreligious cleansing by Islamist militants and courts," Shea said in her testimony, which portrayed Islamic extremists, some of whom are powerful rebel groups,

as Christians' biggest threat.

"In addition, [Christians] have lost the protection of the Assad government, making them easy prey for criminals and fighters, whose affiliations are not always clear."

Shea said Islamist militias have made life "impossible" for Christians, relaying the words of Metropolitan Archbishop Jean-Clement Jeanbart of Aleppo's Melkite Greek Catholic Church, who spoke to the Catholic outlet AsiaNews.

"As soon as they reached the city [of Aleppo], Islamist guerrillas, almost all of them from abroad, took over the mosques," Jeanbart said. "Every Friday, an imam launches their messages of hate, calling on the population to kill anyone who does not practice the religion of the Prophet Muhammad."

"They use the courts to level charges of blasphemy. Who[ever] is contrary to their way of thinking pays with his life."

see SYRIA on p. 10

Moore: Revive first-century church model for today

WASHINGTON (BP) — American evangelicals' view of themselves should resemble more closely that held by the church in the first century than that held by Christians in recent decades, Southern Baptist ethicist Russell D. Moore said in a nationally televised interview.

Moore, a Biloxi native and new president of the Nashville-based Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, in an appearance on C-SPAN's Washington Journal on July 8 said there was a message for evangelicals and other social conservatives in the U.S. Supreme Court's invalidation of a federal law defining marriage as only between a man and a woman.

Mistaken image

"For a long time, social conservatives in America had a kind of silent majority view of ourselves, and conservative evangelicals and conservative Roman Catholics had a moral majority view of ourselves, as though we somehow represent the mainstream of American culture — most people really agree with us except for some elites somewhere. That really isn't the case."

Instead, Moore said, Christians "need to start seeing the fact that we're very similar to the way the Christian church was at the very beginning of its existence — a minority of people who are speaking to the larger culture in ways that are going to sometimes seem freakish to that larger culture. I don't think that's anything that should panic us or cause us to become outraged or despondent. I think it's a realistic view of who we are."

Asked about the church and politics, Moore said Christians need to find a path between two erroneous approaches.

"[T]he church can become a political action committee in a way that detracts from the mission of the church and destroys the mission of the church," Moore told C-SPAN host John McArdle, "but I think there's also a way in which the church can stand back and say, 'We don't speak to anything that we believe to be political,' which really means the old question that the Scripture gives us: Who is my neighbor?"

"If we care about our neighbors and if we care about our society, then we have to speak to those things that are for the common good and are for human flourishing."

He said there was a time "when evangelical Christians in America became too triumphalistic, had a Christian definition of a balanced budget amendment or a Christian position on a line-item veto or a Christian position on foreign aid in ways that there is no clear, biblical authority for that, but I think there are some foundational issues that we must speak to out of



Q&A — Russell D. Moore (left), a Biloxi native and new president of the Nashville-based Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, awaits questions from host John McArdle before his July 8 appearance on C-SPAN's Washington Journal. (BP photo)

the convictions that we hold."

DOMA decision

Moore said he was not surprised the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in its June 26 opinion, but was startled by the justices' reasoning.

The majority "essentially said there's no reason to define marriage as the union between a man and a woman exclusively except for hostility and animus toward persons, which we don't believe is the case," Moore said.

Defenders of the biblical, traditional definition of marriage are not saying "the state ought to somehow penalize or stigmatize people," Moore said.

"We're just saying that children have a right to a mother and a father, and there's something distinctive about that sort of family structure that the state has an interest in. The question is whether a child needs a mother and a father, and whether a mother and a father bring something distinctive to the task of parenting."

"I believe that God did not design us simply to be parented but to be mothered and to be fathered."

State's affirmation

Twelve of the 50 American states plus the District of Columbia have legalized same-sex marriage. "This isn't a situation in which what we're trying to do is to have the state affirm the love of two people," Moore said. "We don't need the state to do that. We can affirm love in all sorts of ways without the state becoming involved."

The reason the state is involved is because there's something distinctive about marriage, the union between a man and a woman, that's different from other relationships, and we think that's because the state doesn't create marriage. The state doesn't define it. The state simply recognizes something that already exists."

Variety of topics

A caller from Ashburn, Va., who identified himself as a "bisexual polygamist" wondered how the Supreme Court might define him.

Moore responded by acknowledging he isn't "sure where this is going to go in terms of expanding the definition of marriage. I think there are obviously some polygamists and polyamorists, such as the caller, who are saying they would like to see the marriage definition expanded even further."

"I'm not sure where American culture is going there. All I can say is that I believe there is a unique, distinctive good that comes to honoring and recognizing the union between one man and one woman for life."

During the 45-minute program, Moore responded to questions from McArdle, phone callers, and users of Twitter. Among other topics Moore commented on were the Obama administration's abortion/contraception mandate in its health-care regulations, immigration reform, and surrogate motherhood.

Video of Moore's appearance on C-SPAN is available online at <http://erlc.com/article/video-russell-moore-on-c-spans-washington-journal>.

Heritage Foundation's Walker moving to ERLC

WASHINGTON (BP) — Andrew T. Walker, 28, policy analyst for the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., has been named as the new director of policy studies at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

Walker, a Jacksonville, Ill., native, has worked within Heritage's DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society on marriage, family, and religious liberty issues. Prior to his appointment at Heritage, Walker was a policy analyst for the Kentucky Family Foundation where he focused on issues ranging from family studies to state-sponsored gambling.

At ERLC, he will coordinate strategies for equipping churches to deal with moral and policy concerns.

"American Christians are entering a new era in how they'll relate to the broader culture," Walker said. "I'm excited about

helping Christians in general, and Southern Baptists in particular, think through the dynamics of their faith on any number of contemporary issues. We can't just be a people who stand athwart history yelling, 'Stop!', as William F. Buckley once said; we must also be happy warriors for the Kingdom, yelling, 'Come!'"

Walker earned a master of divinity degree in 2010 from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where new ERLC president Russell D. Moore previously served as dean of the School of Theology and senior vice-president for academic administration. Walker is also a graduate of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., and is pursuing a master of theology degree in ethics from Southern Seminary.

His writings have appeared in such publications as The Weekly Standard, Christianity Today, Touchstone, The Gospel Coalition, and The Louisville Courier-Journal.



"I'm excited about helping Christians in general, and Southern Baptists in particular, think through the dynamics of their faith on any number of contemporary issues."

Andrew T. Walker
director of policy studies at the
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

A nice lady in our neighborhood was out walking her two small dogs. She does it every day at just about the same time of day all year long. I frequently see her and speak to her and the two pooches. On one particular morning, I was passing by them and I said, "They keep you busy don't they?" She replied, "To a dog every day is the same. They are up waiting on me to take them out for their walk every day."

As I walked on that day, I thought to myself how profound that saying was. To a dog every day is the same. Of course, for some dogs there may be some fluctuation of change, but generally speaking they usually get their routine down and especially if there are not kids there to interrupt, it will stay just about the same. Get up, eat a little bit, walk around, stretch, maybe bark a few times and sleep a little more. It's a dog's life! For a dog, it works out okay.

I thought about those of us who are people types. For us every day is not supposed to be the same. In fact, the God who created us gave us a guideline that is actually a command that says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). The God who made us and knows all about us put the plan for our lives in order around a seven day cycle. One of those seven days God has put in place to bless mankind. It is different from the other days. It is to be held in regard as different.

A friend and I were having a conversation about Blue Laws. Those were the laws on the books years ago in Mississippi and most states that controlled many businesses and other activities so that Sunday would be protected as a special day – even a holy day. But years ago Blue Laws were basically removed from the books. I remember when that happened a man who was a manager of a large store located in a mall said, "I do not think that this is going to make a difference. I do not think that it



For a dog...every day is the same

is going to work." The store he managed began opening on Sunday but nobody was buying. Of course, they were keeping close tabs on what would be happening and week after week, Sunday was the lowest sales day of the week. Years later, I asked him how it was going now. He told me that in his store, Sunday had become the second largest sales day of the week.

Add to that the incredible proliferation of youth sporting events that wrap up the entire weekend for so many young people and their families and their time, energy and money to the point that oftentimes in just a few years they shift the weekday of work to the weekend working at recreation. Examine the command of God. One in seven days is to be focused on Him as a day of rest. It is a day for a change of pace, a day of readjustment morally, spiritually, economically and physically. It is to be a day when we change the direction of our thoughts, the movement of our hearts and the relationships in our lives.

It is amazing to recognize that the law was not just for a day to stop and go to church for a few minutes or to the temple

in the Old Testament. It was actually a day that everything about a person, their family, their relationship with God and their relationship with others would be examined and renewed. They were not even to harness up the animals and make them work. They too needed rest and probably when the commandment is lived out according to Scripture even the animals would know that there is a difference on the Lord's Day.

So what can we do? How can we go about reclaiming the wonder of this great command from God in what seems to be an almost impossible cultural environment? Let me suggest three words that may provide some help.

The first word is to inspect. Look at your own life, lifestyle and activities for Sunday. What are you doing and what are you not doing? I am not just talking about the activities that you may be involved in or the church activities that you are not involved in, but beyond those things what are you doing or not doing that may be harmful to your health or detrimental to your family? Would you allow God to guide in your thought process as you sim-

ply look at what your response to the call of God's command is or maybe your lack of response to God's call?

Word two is to protect. It takes effort to honor the Lord on His day. It will take special effort on your part because there are huge influences and enormous opportunities that will rob you from doing what God may desire for you to do. How do you manage to go to work with regularity and effectiveness? Most of you would have to agree that it is just a matter of decision that this part of your life is going to be protected because it is so essential. The same protection may be needed in the things of God because His plan and His timing are essential to you also.

Word three is to reject. Some things need to be done on the Lord's Day even though it is not a work day. There are those special needs that people have to take care of such as medical needs and crises that may come up. But generally speaking there are choices to be made and priorities that must be set. I am not pushing for Blue Laws to be reinstated, but I am pushing for God's people to decide what they will do and not do and to respond and act in a right way.

It is interesting just to stop and think about our own state. If Baptist folk did not spend so much time shopping on Sunday, going to games or participating in sporting activities it would be hard to keep those things open and going. The same might be said for other activities such as casinos. Could they stay open if they were not for Baptists' participation? Could drinking establishments stay open unless we are paying the freight? As you think about making one day His day and how you go about using that time, never forget that it is never wrong to do right.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

BIBLIOCRYPTHER

SGJ AQJI RGA BJA R KJW AQRA QRAQ

LTURPIGU VB EVHZUWBUPP: BUVAQUG

PQRRT UOVT WEUTT EVAQ AQUU.

LPRTXP SVOU: SJIG

Clue: P = S

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Job 10:7

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Revivals & Homecomings

► **Mt. Vernon Church, Liberty:** 166th homecoming, July 21; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Jim Futrat, speaker; Steve Bishop, music; Jerry Causey, pastor.

► **Wheeler Grove Church, Alcorn Co.:** Revival, July 21 – 24; Sun., 6:30 p.m.; Mon. – Wed., 7 p.m.; Phil Hoskins, speaker.

► **Union Hall Church, Brookhaven:** Revival, July 21 – 24; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the ground and 6 p.m.; Mon. – Wed., 7 p.m.; Thomas Wicker, speaker; Harvey Magee, music; Billy Joe Deer, pastor.

► **Second Church, Greenville:** 75th anniversary, July 21; worship, 11 a.m., followed by a covered dish picnic style lunch.

► **Victory Church, Bassfield:** Revival, July 21 – 24; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. – Wed., 7 p.m.; Don Stewart, speaker; Phillip Butler, music.

► **Edon Church, Stringer:** Revival, July 21 – 24; 7 p.m. nightly; Brent Barker, speaker; Ed Meadows, music; John Davis, pastor.

► **First Church, Byram:** Revival, July 21 – 24; Sun., 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. – Tues., 6:30 p.m.; Wed., 6 p.m.; John Gordan, speaker; Phil Odom, music.

► **Mt. Olivet Church, Scott Association:** Homecoming and 10 year anniversary, July 21; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds. The church was founded in 1876, but was re-opened in 2003 after being closed for three years. Bruce Robinson, pastor.

► **Cash Church, Scott Association:** Revival, July 21 – 26; Sun., 10:45 a.m. followed by potluck lunch; Mon. – Fri., 7 p.m.; Matt Armstrong, speaker; Cliff Horton, music; M.L. Wallace, pastor.

► **Holmesville Church, McComb:** 125th anniversary,

July 21; fellowship and doughnuts, 9 a.m.; services, 10:30 a.m. with church history presentation, music, and speaker, followed by dinner on the grounds and special music, 1:30 p.m.; David Milligan, speaker; Dogwood Cross, music; Lee Mathis, pastor.

► **Heucks Retreat Church, Brookhaven:** Homecoming, July 21; services, 10 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Joey Beeson, speaker; Stacey Smith, music.

► **Robinson Church, Liberty:** Revival, July 19 – 21; Fri. – Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner and singing, ice cream social, Fri.; Ellis Hollingsworth, speaker; Kenny Gatlin, music; Peggy Sharp, pianist; John Morris Campbell, organist.

► **New Home Church, Lula:** Revival, July 21 – 24; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Mon. – Wed., 7:30 p.m.; Dennis Smithy, speaker; Tal Vardaman, music; Billy McKay, pastor.

Vacation Bible School



DIXIE CHURCH, HATTIESBURG: Five professions of faith; \$1500 missions offering, which is to be used to purchase approximately 150 walking canes for a mission trip to Romania in October. Crystal Swilley, director; Neil Harviston, student pastor.



IMMANUEL CHURCH, VICKSBURG: June 17 -21; 50 attending daily; June 23, closing ceremony.



BIG LEVEL CHURCH, WIGGINS



MIDWAY CHURCH, NEWTON: June 17 – 22; Gil Alan, pastor.



FIRST CHURCH, HICKORY FLAT: June 17 – 21; 158 enrolled; three professions of faith; Gary Linville, pastor.



PARKWAY CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO: Average attendance, 143; Derrick Wilson, pastor.



UNITY CHURCH, MOSELLE: June 19 – 22; average attendance, 55; Garry Edwards, pastor.



SANDERSVILLE CHURCH, SANDERSVILLE: June 9 – 13.



FREEDOM CHURCH, NEW ALBANY: first week in June; enrollment, 341 with 15 decisions.



FIRST CHURCH, MORTON AND LIFESPRING CHURCH, MORTON: June 17 – 21; 180 total attendance.

Staff Changes



TRACE RIDGE CHURCH, RIDGELAND, welcomes three new staff members: Jo Lynn Delancy, ministry assistant; Paul Gay, business manager; and Larry Tubb, minister of education.



CORNERSVILLE CHURCH, CORNERSVILLE, has called Thomas Chandler as pastor. He was ordained at Thaxton Church Apr. 14. He is shown with his wife, Ashley, Jimmy Russell, and Gary Pettit.



TERRY'S CREEK CHURCH, MAGNOLIA, has called LaVerne Summerlin as pastor effective June 1. He previously served Friendship Church, McComb, for 15 years. He is shown with his wife, Gail, and son, David.



HARMONY CHURCH, BEN-TON-TIPPAH ASSOCIATION, has called Ron Mitchell as pastor. Mitchell previously served the church during the 70's. He comes to Harmony from Lowrey Memorial Church, Blue Mountain, where he was also the director of the NOBTS North Mississippi Center at Blue Mountain College. He is shown with his wife, Neida.

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featuring
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A Life Changed Through Disaster Relief

When I was in my mid-teens at a summer church camp, the evangelist preached a sermon inviting anyone who felt led toward ministry to come forward. I felt convicted and went to the altar and prayed. But that's as far as it went.

I had been working with my dad in his small excavating company since I was about 13. I really enjoyed operating the heavy equipment and driving the big dump trucks during my high school days. Later, when my wife Kay and I married, my dad invited me to be his business partner.

In less than 3 years, my dad was diagnosed with cancer and died about a year later. At 23 years old, with only one semester of college, I continued in the business. It became first and foremost in my life. Being young and ambitious, I continued to grow and expand the company for another 10 years.

My wife, who was a public school teacher, and I built the home of our dreams, had three sons, had an above-average income and enjoyed the lifestyle we could afford. But then things began to change within me.

I started to realize that I was spending my whole life living my dreams and achieving my goals, but was living for myself. The more my business succeeded, the less active I became in church and the less time I spent with my family.

While watching TV one night in September of 1985, the news alert flashed that there had been a massive earthquake in Mexico City. For 3-4 days I watched as the people were frantically digging through the rubble for survivors, many using heavy equipment and big trucks. I realized that I could do something like that to help the people, since that was my vocation and skill. I just didn't know where to start. I phoned

my pastor and told him that I would be available to help. I had never done anything like that before, but I had a burning desire to try. I would weep like a child as I continued watching the devastation and the victims of the earthquake on TV.

My phone rang a couple of days later and Paul Harrell, Director of the Brotherhood Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at that time, asked if I was available to go with the Disaster Relief Team to Mexico City. I agreed and went with the team. It was the first time in my adult life that I was with a group of Christian men serving God by helping others. We provided hot meals for the victims and workers in Mexico City 17 days, and it totally and completely changed my life. Nothing I had ever done was so fulfilling and satisfying.

After returning home, I continued as an active member of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Team, and am still a member today. I later sold my business and surrendered to full time ministry, got degrees at Mississippi State University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and have pastored churches in North and South Mississippi for the past 28 years. I have served in numerous foreign countries and in many states in the United States with the Disaster Relief team and doing evangelistic missions as a volunteer.

It was through the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and the godly leadership, friendship and influence of men like Jim Didlake and his staff through the years, that my life was radically changed and that I have served our Lord vocationally for the past 28 years.

I am eternally grateful to everyone who has given through the Cooperative Program. I am a life that was changed.

Just for the Record



The children of **MT. OLIVE CHURCH, BALDWYN**, spent June 21 - 23 at Camp Armstrong in Blue Springs. Dru Allen, camp pastor; Kenneth Leslie, worship service leader, and the church's senior youth were camp counselors.



FIRST CHURCH, COLLINSVILLE, ordained five men as deacons June 30. Shown are Jason and Shea Mowdy; Kline and Marsha Gressett; Dan and Sherri McClure; Tony and Pam Grice; and Kevin and Lessia Smith.



NORTH COLUMBIA CHURCH, COLUMBIA, honored its senior ladies with a tea party June 15.



BUNKER HILL CHURCH, COLUMBIA, celebrated Independence Day with a special patriotic service June 30.

SOUTH LOUISVILLE CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, recognized its Bible drillers: front to back, Zachary Allen, Jenna Lovorn, Carley Puckett, Brianna Jaudon, Autumn Smith, Allayna Lovorn, and Brittany Jaudon.

In other Church News:

► **Sunrise Church, Leake County**, will have a dedication service for their new sanctuary July 21, 11 a.m., followed by a potluck lunch.



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Please join us by supporting the "It's A Beautiful Life" Benefit on Thursday, August 1, at The Smith in downtown Jackson beginning at 6pm. This evening will feature former Miss Mississippi, Alison Kellogg-North, who relates to the struggles of motherhood and volunteer her time at a local pregnancy center in Los Angeles, CA. She will be sharing her perspective on how each of us can empower women to choose life.

All donations are tax deductible and will directly benefit women and children who are most vulnerable. Thank you for enabling Mississippi agencies to continue their vital work in helping women choose life.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Alison Kellogg-North

SPECIAL MUSIC

Cassandra Carter Sledge

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Brad McMillan

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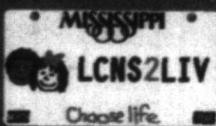
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Vacation Bible School



BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR: Directed by Aubrie Howell; Gotta Move — Keepin' In Step With the Sprint, theme.



Sam Blaine, shown, took a pie in the face June 7 for the boys losing the penny offering during VBS at **HIGHLAND CHURCH, SENATOBIA**. The children and adults raised \$642.30 for Highland's mission trip to Ecuador July 13 – 20.



Lucy Houseal and William Cook, **TRINITY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, took a pie in the face after the VBS participants exceeded their missions offering goal.



ROUNDAWAY CHURCH, DODDSVILLE: June 2 – 7; enrollment, 84; 12 professions of faith; \$1001 missions offering for Malaysia; Bob Hill, pastor; Gina Staggs, VBS director.



JONES CHAPEL CHURCH, NETTLETON: June 19 – 22; 30 – 36 attendance nightly; Corey Hall, pastor.



MT. OLIVET CHURCH, SCOTT COUNTY: average attendance, 83; three public professions of faith; John Yates, worship leader; shown is pastor Bruce Robinson and some of the participants shown in front of a canned goods offering for the Carlyle Crisis Center. The church exceeded its goal of 600 canned goods.



FIRST CHURCH, COLLINSVILLE



BEULAH CHURCH, LEXINGTON: June 24 – 28; 69 enrolled; 59, average attendance; students collected peanut butter, jelly, and ketchup for the Baptist Children's Village.

In other VBS News:

► **Riverside Church, Money:** July 22 – 26, 6 – 8 p.m.; meal nightly.

► **First Church, Vicksburg:** Children were challenged to bring an offering to help the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board build a longhouse in Malaysia. The goal of \$900 was greatly surpassed, and as a result, avid Ole Miss fan and pastor Matt Buckles was decorated in maroon and white June 14. Total offering was \$2,423.08. Margie Heltzel, VBS coordinator.

► **Slayden Church, Marshall Association:** June 24 – 28; 67 teachers/helpers; 142 children enrolled; average attendance, 120; nine professions of faith; mission offering sent to missionaries in Southeast Asia, \$2162.16; Lisa Jones, director; Rusty Fair, pastor.



PLEASANT HILL CHURCH, ASHLAND: Shown is Herbert Luther dressed as the Apostle Paul.

Just for the Record

Youth from **FIRST CHURCH, MORTON**, worked at the Carlisle Crisis Center, Forest, assisting families in need with food and clothing. Shown are Emily Marler, Kara Beth Johnson, Faith Creel (seated in front), Draik Morgan, Allison Massey, Lilly Herring, Mikalah Hall, and Jason Westmoreland.



FIRST CHURCH, TERRY, sent a mission team of 15 students and adults on a mission trip to Port-au-Prince, Haiti to serve in an orphanage, personal evangelism, and construction work. Shown are the participants.



DESOTO HILLS CHURCH, SOUTHAVEN, held a baby dedication for Hadley Langston Smith. Shown are pastor James Lewis and parents, Ashley and Jeremy Smith.



Five Union County churches – **OLD OAK GROVE, BEULAH, AMAZIAH, SALEM, AND LIGHTHOUSE** – participated in a youth camp June 20 – 22.

Submission Guidelines



The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

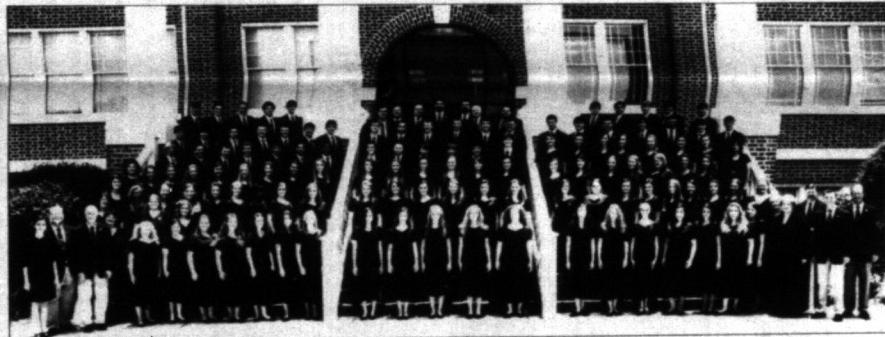
Photographs may be color or black and white. Digital photos may be submitted via either e-mail. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

College News



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY hosted Mississippi Baptist Camps. Pictured is the 2013 Mississippi Baptist All-State Youth Choir and Orchestra at the conclusion of their rehearsal camp at William Carey University. The choir held rehearsals at WCU June 10-13 before embarking on a six-day concert tour. Also Pictured are campers at the 2013 Mississippi Baptist Convention HeartSong Camp as they rehearse for the music and drama production of "Change the World" that they presented to family, friends, and church members on June 28. The performance was held at the conclusion of the Mississippi Baptist Convention HeartSong Camp for 7th-12th graders, which ran June 25-28 at WCU.

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STATES

cont. from p. 1

far, same sex couples have been denied marriage licenses in Gulfport, Poplarville, Hattiesburg, Jackson, and Tupelo.

While talk of challenging Mississippi's amendment has been muted among same sex marriage advocates since the DOMA decision, opponents of same sex marriage believe such a lawsuit is in the works.

Maggie Gallagher, author of Debating Same-Sex Marriage, said American political order shifted when the Supreme Court made its decision to overturn DOMA on June 26, with traditional marriage supporters becoming a "disempowered and disfavored" minority.

"Marriage as an important cultural status is rooted in a shared belief that we need to bring together male and female to make and raise the next generation together, and that adults have a serious obligation to make serious sacrifices, including their sexual life, to make that happen," Gallagher said to editor-at-large Kathryn Jean Lopez of National Review Online.

"Marriage, after gay marriage, is an under-defined commitment to love and caretaking, whose public character and status is newly uncertain," Gallagher

added. "Why love? Why sex? Why just two? What does this have to do with parenting? What other relationships have an equal right to be counted as marriage?"

Gallagher said she would like to see Congress pass an expanded DOMA that would include specific statements forbidding polygamous marriages.

The Boston Globe said Indiana and Iowa could become the focal points for traditional marriage supporters trying to pass marriage amendments.

Lawsuits against state bans on same sex marriage were "nearly a given" after the DOMA decision, said Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Faith & Ethics Council. Same sex marriage opponents may not have been expecting the lawsuits so quickly, he added, but same sex marriage advocates are taking advantage of the shock waves created by the Court's decision.

"What we are witnessing is the metamorphosis of the U.S. Supreme Court — it has ceased being a fair and impartial arbiter of legal disputes in which it interprets the law," Page said. "[It] has transformed itself into a forum in which political correctness and the whims of popular opinion dictate its decisions, rather than the strict letter of the law or the will of the body politic as manifested in legitimate elections."

Arkansas constitutional

Amendment 83 bans same sex marriage, which lesbian couple Kendall and Julia Wright said "violates their constitutional rights." The Wrights were married in Iowa and are suing on behalf of 11 other homosexual couples in Arkansas.

Same sex partners April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse have adopted children separately, according to the Detroit Free Press, but wish to legally marry and unite their families in Michigan. Bernard Friedman, a federal judge in Detroit, said the couple is "entitled to their day in court and they shall have it."

Same-sex marriage supporters are not the only group reveling in the Court's decisions, Religion Today reported. Polygamists also are celebrating the overturning of DOMA, with some observers saying the decision could eventually provide equal rights to having multiple marriage partners.

"Proponents of 'plural marriages' are riding the homosexual movement's wave of success all the way to legitimacy," said Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council. "They're using the same playbook, the same sound bites. ... After all, who are we to say that two or three or nine consenting adults shouldn't be able to make the same commitment? Love is love, right?"

Tony Perkins is not related to William H. Perkins Jr., editor of The Baptist Record.

COURT

cont. from p. 1

to the decision, The Tampa Tribune reported.

Beckwith said he does not object to all contraceptives, only those that can act as abortifacients by triggering a miscarriage. The chief executive officer of Beckwith Electric Co. added, "Where I draw the line is ... 'emergency contraception,' but it's deceitful because they're not contraception. They kill an innocent human life," he told The Tribune.

The abortion/contraception mandate requires coverage of drugs the U.S. Food and Drug Administration classifies as contraceptives. These include Plan B and other "morning-after" pills with a secondary post-fertilization mechanism that can cause an abortion by preventing implantation of tiny embryos. The mandate also covers "ella," which — in a manner similar to the abortion drug RU 486 — can act even after implantation to end the life of the child.

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville joined the Christian Legal Society and other evangelical organizations in a friend-of-the-court brief in the case to defend the right of Beckwith and other religiously motivated employers to express their faith in their business decisions.

Ruling from federal court in Tampa, Judge Elizabeth Kovachevich found that Beckwith and his company had demonstrated they likely would prevail

in showing the mandate infringed on their religious freedom. She said Beckwith Electric Co., not just Beckwith individually, had religious exercise rights under the First Amendment and the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

The right to free exercise of religion under the First Amendment and RFRA "is not relinquished by efforts to engage in free enterprise under the corporate form," Kovachevich wrote. "And any action that debases, or cheapens, the intrinsic value of the tenet of religious tolerance that is entrenched in the Constitution cannot stand."

Kovachevich, who was nominated to the bench by U.S. President Ronald Reagan, stated that the mandate "substantially burdens" Beckwith's free exercise of religion. The federal government failed to show it had a "compelling interest" in restricting that freedom, she wrote.

In issuing a preliminary injunction, she also found Beckwith and his company would suffer "irreparable harm" without such an order — harm that surpasses that which would be inflicted upon the government with the order. An injunction also is "in the public interest," another requirement for such action, she stated.

Beckwith Electric Co. is one of 22 for-profit organizations that have won injunctions or temporary restraining orders blocking enforcement of the controversial requirement while their suits proceed in court, according to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

SYRIA

cont. from p. 1

Christians also have become prey to kidnappers, Shea said, noting that bishops have been abducted and never heard from again while other Christians are held for ransom.

Shea said one father told his ordeal to Swedish Assyrian journalist Nuri Kino. "We're not poor, we didn't run from poverty," the father told Kino. "We ran from fear. I have to think about my 12-year-old daughter. She's easy prey for kidnappers. Three children of our friends were kidnapped. In two cases they paid enormous ransoms to get the children back, and in one case they paid but got the child back dead."

Shea testified that sharia (Islamic) courts associated with Islamist rebels have targeted Christians for expulsion from their homes, forced conversion to Islam, and ordered summary executions. Towns in a Christian valley near Homs experienced rebel control as described by an Orthodox cleric.

"[The towns] are ruled by newly-appeared emirs, and those Christians who were not able to flee these places are obliged to pay jizya — a special tax that allows them to remain Christians, and Christian women must hide their faces like Moslem women," the cleric said, as relayed by Shea. "If they don't pay the jizya they are simply killed."

MS POSITIONS

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Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

God Restores His People • Ezra 1:1-5; Nehemiah 8:1-6; Jeremiah 29:10-14

God's Story is chockfull with promises. God's people face the prospect of a bright future because their future is built upon God's promises. During the grimmest times, God's people have a realistic hope of better things to come. Last week we examined God's discipline of His wayward people. Israel was exiled in 722 B.C. and Judah in 586 B.C.

Yet, even in the midst of judgment, God promised restoration to carry out His plan of reclaiming those separated from Him by sin. This soul-saving plan came to full flower in the New Testament, but God also had plans for His people in the years after the Babylonian exile, after 539 B.C.

The Promise of God (Jer. 29:10-14)

The last good king of Judah, Josiah, died in 609 B.C. trying to prevent the Egyptians from fighting the Babylonians. Seventy years later (539 B.C.), the vast Babylonian Empire suffered a crushing blow at the hands of Cyrus the Persian. Through Jeremiah, God foretold the seventy years allotted for Babylon's dominance (Jer. 29:10a). The prophecy included a promise to restore His people to Judah from Babylon (29:10b).

The reason God promised to restore His people was because He had plans for them, "plans to prosper" and to give them "hope and a future" (29:11). Today, this verse is a favorite of high

school and college students alike. The assurance of divine favor and blessing, the promise of hope and a future, and knowing God was working for their benefit, motivated the exile-wearied people of Judah then as much as it does America's youth now.

The promise included God's listening ear to His people's prayers (29:12).

His people were assured of success in finding Him when they sought Him wholeheartedly (29:13-14a).

Perhaps the brightest part of the promise in practical terms was the divine promise to bring them back from captivity, gathering them "from all the nations and places" where He had banished them (29:14b). Once again Jerusalem and Judah would become "Home Sweet Home" (29:14c).

The Return of God's People (Ezra 1:1-5)

Many decades after Jeremiah had uttered God's promise of restoration, Cyrus king of Persia became the human instrument through which the prom-

ise was implemented (Ezra 1:1). Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. In his first year, he issued his famous emancipation proclamation (1:2-4), freeing the Hebrew slaves and allowing them to go home. Cyrus' proclamation to the Hebrews was not unique; he liberated other captive people using similar language. However, the Hebrews saw the

LORD's hand in the unfolding historical events.

Cyrus' proclamation has several notable aspects.

First, he used the covenant name Yahweh or LORD, to refer to the Hebrew God (1:2-3). Second, he informed them God had given him all kingdoms and appointed him "to build a temple for Him at Jerusalem in Judah" (1:2b; NIV). Third, he enjoined as many people as wanted to go, to journey to Jerusalem and take part in building the temple (1:3). Finally, anyone wishing to remain in Babylon was to assist the returnees by providing "silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem" (12:4). God's people were finally free to return home.

The Response of God's People (Neh. 8:1-6)

Many exiles accepted Cyrus' invitation to return to Judah; many did not return. Initially, the people laid the foundation for the temple in 536 B.C., but they soon were distracted by building their own houses. God raised up Haggai and Zechariah in 520 B.C. to address their misplaced priorities. The temple was rebuilt around 516-15 B.C. Once again, however, God's people slipped into a spiritual malaise, diverting their attention from wholeheartedly following Him. In 458 B.C. God sent Ezra the Scribe from Babylon to Jerusalem. Ezra was a scholar of God's Law (Ezra 7:10). He sought to refocus God's people on keeping God's Law.

Around 445 B.C. God sent Nehemiah, cupbearer to the Persian king, to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah 8:1-6 focuses on the dedication ceremony led by Ezra upon the wall's completion. Ezra read the Law of Moses from "daybreak till noon" (Neh. 8:3). At the conclusion of the reading, "Ezra praised the Lord, the great God;" then the people lifted their hands and said, "Amen! Amen!" bowing down, worshiping the Lord "with their faces to the ground" (8:6). We too should rededicate our lives to the Lord when He restores us.

VanHorn is Dean of the Mississippi College School of Christian Studies and the Arts.

Can I Find Meaning? • Ecclesiastes 1:1-4, 12-14; 2:1-3, 12-14, 24-26

Ecclesiastes belongs to the Old Testament collection of wisdom literature, a group of books of wise sayings on concrete issues. The work of wise men or sages was very important in the development of Judaism. These men in a sense were successors to the prophets, but did not attain the same level of influence. Wisdom was defined by the sages as the ability to discern involving keen, farsighted understanding and judgment as well as common sense that went into building a happy and successful life.

The book of Ecclesiastes is an accurate journal of a journey through life taken by a man who had the time, money, and energy to search for the meaning of life. The name of the book means "preacher" or "one who calls an assembly or a meeting." Traditionally, the authorship has been accredited to Solomon because of the information in chapter 1:1—"son of David," seemingly could be no one other than Solomon.

The reader of the journal discovers the theme at the very beginning perhaps because of the emptiness the author had experienced in the quest of his journey—a diligent quest for purpose, meaning, and satisfaction in human life. The word vanity or meaningless appears thirty-seven times in response to the many things "under the sun" that cannot be understood about life. In Hebrew, repeating a word, i.e. Vanity, vanity, constitutes a superlative giving

the meaning of greatest vanity or utter vanity. It is probably intended as an exclamation or outcry.

Solomon's perspective is an "under the sun" perspective—a strictly human viewpoint. When one leaves God out of the equation, it is empty—nothing satisfied. Human knowledge cannot adequately answer eternal questions. Relevant is an excellent description of this study—accurate, applicable, appropriate, and timely—for our times, so far removed from Solomon's.

The Preacher rehearses the cycles of life that occur constantly in the world around him and laments that there is nothing new "under the sun," and that man, regardless of his accomplishments, is not remembered by those that follow him.

In verse 12, the writer introduces himself as having been "king over Israel in Jerusalem," citing again a fact that identifies Solomon as the author. He gains respect for his journal by establishing the research—exploration, examination, and experimentation—that he put into his quest. The first experiment he carried out was with wisdom:

He accomplished great works of architecture; a beautiful structure he built for himself is still considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Among his great works were other houses, gardens, vineyards, parks and pools. He acquired many slaves required for completing these projects and assuring their upkeep, and amassed collections of gold, silver and precious gems. Again, he received great pleasure from

these activities, but that was all. There was nothing lasting in any of it—no inner peace.

In the second ex-

periment,

the Preacher discovers that what appear to be worthy occupiers of time can become unbearable burdens. He concentrated on unrestrained pleasures according to a purposeful plan. He tastes the good life and finds it is centered on self-gratification and materialism. In these verses, the words foolishness or folly can be described as seeking exciting experiences or living on the edge, and wine can apply to all mind-altering substances. Experimentation can deceive a person into thinking these pursuits are all there is and

cause one to get lost in the pursuit for purpose.

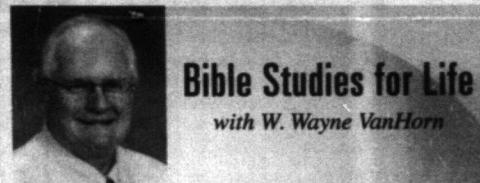
Solomon concludes that wisdom is certainly superior to madness and folly; however, death comes to both the wise and the fool, and a man must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it and may not appreciate it. He despairs realizing there is no gain in all his labors. This is meaningless.

The first indication that the Preacher has found a partial solution to his search is that he has learned to pursue the simple way of life, "eat and drink, and find satisfaction in his work," because this, too, is from the hand of God. To the man who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but the sinner must give all the wealth he has gathered and stored to the one who pleases God. This, too, is meaningless, "chasing after the wind."

The conclusion is that searching for the goal of one's life "under the sun" apart from God results in emptiness, dissatisfaction and discontentment—"a chasing after the wind," fueling the frantic search for the answer.

Gaining wisdom and finding satisfaction through work point to the One who provides wisdom and the ability to work and hope for discovering meaning in this life.

Duncan is a member of First Church, Starkville.



Bible Studies for Life

with W. Wayne VanHorn



Explore the Bible

with Marion D. Duncan

Just for the Record



CARROLL-MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION welcomed Jim Pender and his wife, Loretta, as Associational Missions Director with a reception at Southside Church. Shown are pastor Billy Little, Olene Little, and the Penders.



LIBERTY CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY, honored its fathers June 16. Shown, from left, are W.L. Dubard, father with the most family members present; Donny Cleveland, youngest father in attendance; and Ed Tharp, oldest father in attendance. Gary Tanner, pastor.



NORTH RIPLEY CHURCH, RIPLEY, held a note burning and homecoming June 23. Shown are former pastor Lamar Grisham and pastor Chris Lewellen.



The youth of **NESHoba CHURCH, UNION**, participated in Cross Over Houston during the Southern Baptist Convention. The students served at Firetower Church, Conroe, Tex., by manning games, face painting, and performing with puppets, drama, and music.



Students from **CALVARY CHURCH, CLEVELAND**, recently participated in a local mission project by helping Teach For America students move into dorms at the local university. Shown are Daniel Guerra, Lucas Braswell, Adam Cummins, Tristain Steadman, Kelley Harper, Josh Reed, and Amanda MacCommon; kneeling, Rob Lawrence, youth pastor.



HIGHPOINTE CHURCH, RAYMOND, held a deacon ordination and installation service June 23. Bill Rowland, shown with his wife, Cathy, was installed as a deacon, and J.C. Sanders, shown with his wife, Georgia, was ordained as a deacon. Jerry File, right, pastor.

NEW POLICY FOR PHOTO'S SUBMISSIONS

Effective with every subsequent issue of *The Baptist Record*, all photographs submitted for publication in the newspaper must be sent via e-mail as a jpeg attachment (.jpg). Because of the cost and inconvenience of submitting a printed photograph (which involves taking a digital photograph, having it processed and printed, and the cost of postage involved in mailing), we are making this change to help both the sender and *The Baptist Record* to be good stewards. Photos can be submitted to *The Baptist Record* via e-mail at no cost, as opposed to the costs noted above. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.



NEW ZION CHURCH, BRAXTON, recognized its RAs and GAs Dec. 2.



CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, recognized all fathers on Father's Day. Shown are Kelly Porter, youngest father; pastor Hal Hatten; and Melvin Allen, oldest father.



STEELE CHURCH, FOREST, held a baby dedication. Shown are former pastor Reggie Williams, Ashley, Britton, and Leigh Warren.